



PlayTime Productions
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Dear Alumni, Families, and Friends,

The time has come to acknowledge that PlayTime has taken its final bow. The pandemic has rewritten the script for keeping the wheels turning as they had been for over four decades. I have worked to maintain and build the organization for 23 years. Over the past two years, I have had to oversee the majority of that work be dismantled. An overwhelming amount of time and energy would need to be devoted to get back to what we once had.

Truthfully, the organization was at a turning point with a growing need for revitalization of staff and adequate sustainable funding. Unfortunately the opportunity for transition and training has passed. Maybe if I were 10 years younger, it would be worth the reinvestment of time and energy to rebuild and start again.

The “Theater for Young Audiences” course I took at UW-Madison years ago taught that children’s theatres fell into two models; performance or process. Most performance-based models feature adult actors putting on shows for children. In the other model, the process of learning about theatre is key for child participants, ending with a limited performance for relatives and friends. There are many other process-oriented theatre and arts opportunities in which children can participate. PlayTime has been an unusual hybrid model featuring a cast of children focusing on performance while encompassing and absorbing the process component.

One reason this children’s theatre has been so worthwhile and unique is the standard to which we held ourselves. We spent weeks rehearsing with the kids to create a top-notch performance for thousands of audience members in a dozen different public venues. There was real purpose to our extensive planning and rehearsal time together.

Other reasons PlayTime meant so much to me in particular were; the sharing of story morals, helping children gain reading and language acuity, interpreting and expressing vocal, facial, and body language to enhance social skills. All of these aspects were solidified in importance by my studies in psychology.

Furthermore, I valued the opportunity to interact with people from many different walks of life; the children, families, fellow artists, teacher mentors, and representatives of other benevolent community and arts organizations.

During my tenure, PlayTime's staff has gotten older as we aged into, and past, our retirement years. There have been numerous attempts to replace our now retired musician, our production crew that puts up the set and runs the lights, as well as the producer and manager positions, all to varying success, but the opportunity to implement our transition planning has vanished since March of 2020.

Maybe as time goes by someone else will step forward. I am willing to advise and I am willing to maintain the non-profit organizational status a bit longer, but the accounting, grant writing, reporting, fundraising, promotion, managing, scheduling, venue procurement, equipment maintenance, coordinating cast, families, staff and board would have to be done by someone else. This Managing/Artistic Director/Producer position is equal to that of a full-time teaching position.

Working with the amazing children to foster a successful cooperative effort was the greatest privilege. I also adored designing the art of the moving picture on the stage. I would love to direct more plays in the future if that were the only commitment, but that is the one job most eagerly sought after. The hard task is providing the organizational opportunity to direct, and no one has yet stepped forward to take that crucial role. Now, with waning to no compensation, it will be nearly impossible to fill this managerial position.

I could also wait in the wings to help guide a sanctioned someone else, but we must take care to protect and retain the special reputation that has surrounded PlayTime since the beginning. When it was time for me to take over from our founding director, Teddy Studt, it was like a buggy passenger hopping into the driver's seat to take over one rein, and then the other, to safely guide the horses before transitioning to driving an automobile. Now, there is nothing to transition from but words on a page. Therefore, I am now administering a glide to a graceful ending.

Thank you to Teddy and all of the cast alumni and parents and staff and board members and volunteers and benefactors and audience members over all the years. As the curtain falls, may the memories of the magic live on in the family of PlayTime, happily ever after.

Sadly and Sincerely,
Renaye